Social Studies

Using Special Talents

by Sharon Franklin

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PEARSON
Scott Foresman

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Students Helping Across America

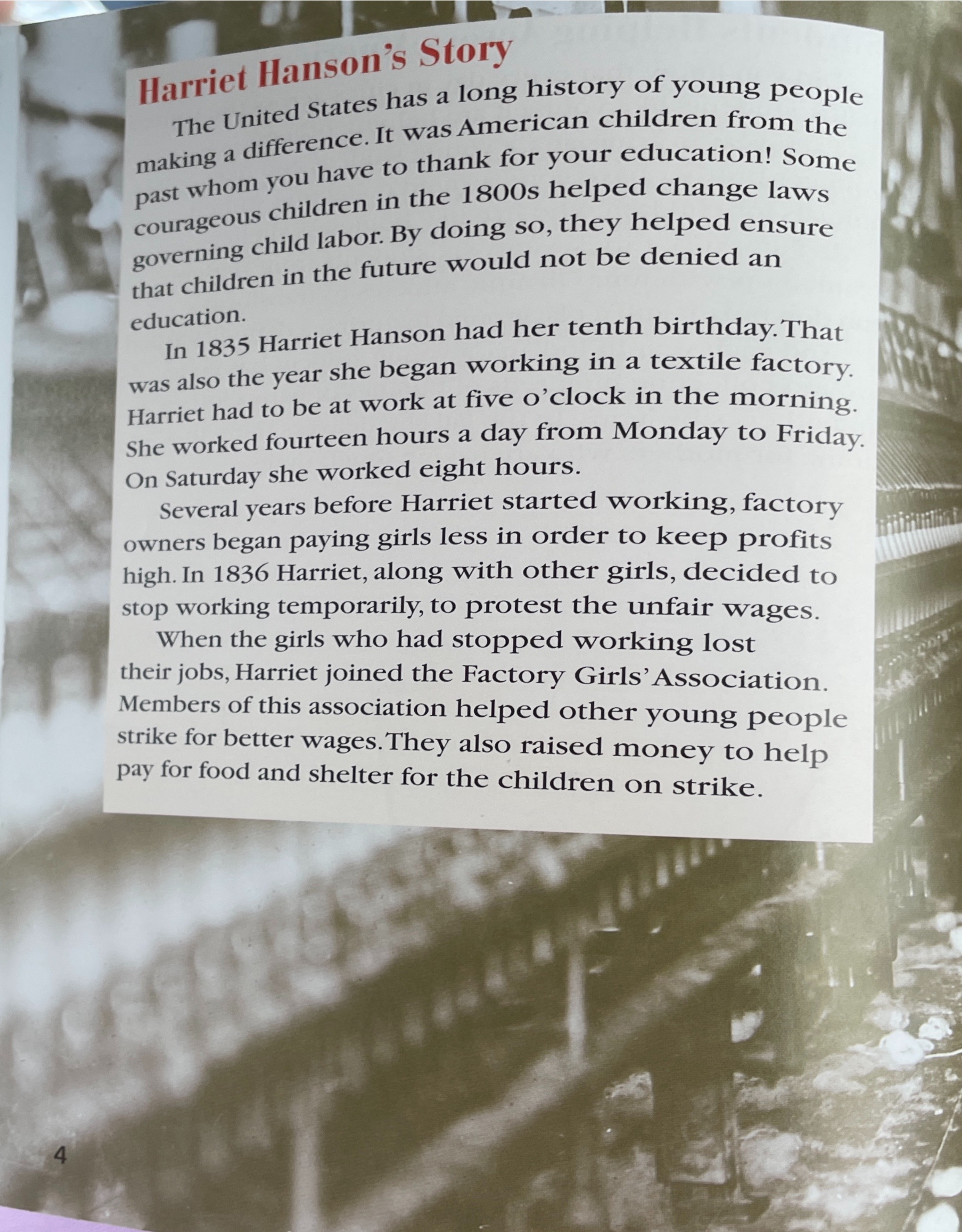
Did you know that every day in cities across the United States, students like yourself are helping others?

Each year in Louisiana, a young student and her younger brother have gone around collecting stuffed animals for children who live in a homeless shelter.

In New York City, seventy-six students from Harlem teamed up with four Olympic athletes to transform a run-down park into a playground featuring a daffodil garden.

And each year in Indiana, a young student has gone around collecting hundreds of bundles of baby clothes and other baby items. In the fall she delivers them to a home for mothers who are having tough times.

Students from Harlem transformed a run-down park into a playground using daffodils.



Harriet Hanson's Story

The United States has a long history of young people making a difference. It was American children from the past whom you have to thank for your education! Some courageous children in the 1800s helped change laws governing child labor. By doing so, they helped ensure that children in the future would not be denied an education.

In 1835 Harriet Hanson had her tenth birthday. That was also the year she began working in a textile factory. Harriet had to be at work at five o'clock in the morning. She worked fourteen hours a day from Monday to Friday. On Saturday she worked eight hours.

Several years before Harriet started working, factory owners began paying girls less in order to keep profits high. In 1836 Harriet, along with other girls, decided to stop working temporarily, to protest the unfair wages.

When the girls who had stopped working lost their jobs, Harriet joined the Factory Girls' Association. Members of this association helped other young people strike for better wages. They also raised money to help pay for food and shelter for the children on strike.

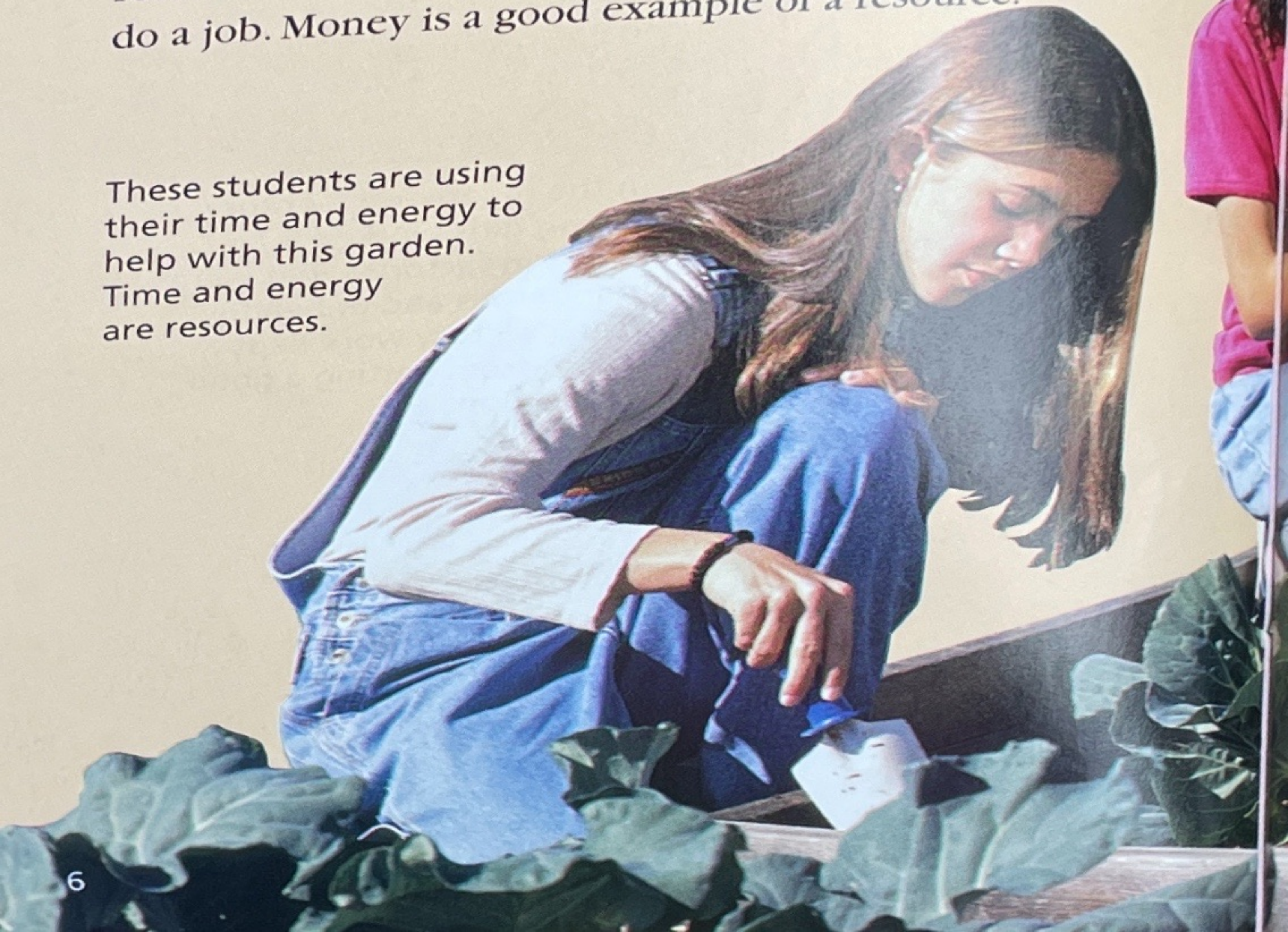
In the nineteenth-century, young girls worked long hours in factories that were dangerous and unhealthy. Their factory work kept them from getting a good education.

How Your Resources Can Help

You have now read about several young people who worked hard to help others. Can you think of times you've helped someone? Maybe you've helped a family member. Perhaps you've taken the garbage out for your mom or helped a brother or sister with homework.

Or maybe you've helped a friend. Have you ever lent a book to a friend who was sick in bed? Or simply helped a friend with chores? We often help people we know. But have you ever helped someone you didn't know?

You might be afraid of helping someone you don't know because you're not sure whether you have enough resources to help them. Resources are things that help you do a job. Money is a good example of a resource.



These students are using their time and energy to help with this garden. Time and energy are resources.

Money can certainly come in handy. But think about the young people you read about earlier in the book. They made a big difference by using resources that everyone has: time, desire, willingness, good ideas, and hard work.

What are some resources you could use to help other people?

What are your special talents?

A resource can also be something like a special talent or interest. Are you a great dog trainer with a well-behaved dog? Perhaps you and your dog could pay a weekly visit to a senior care facility. You and your dog could help a lonely senior to begin to open up, like a butterfly that is set to emerge from a cocoon.

If you are very interested in something special, you can become an expert on the topic. Being an expert can make you a resource for others. Are you a computer whiz? Try tutoring people who don't know a lot about computers. Are you an artist? Maybe some of the things you've sketched could become a mural for your school.

Some people think they don't have special talents or interests that can help other people. Sondra Clark disagrees. Sondra is a young author who has received many national awards for helping other people. She believes everyone can do something to make others feel good.

For Sondra it started when she entered an essay-writing contest. In her essay, Sondra described why her dad was great. When she won, she told the contest sponsor to donate the money to charity. The sponsor was so impressed that he asked Sondra to be a young spokesperson for a group dedicated to helping poor and hungry children in foreign countries. Sondra's work helped relieve the suffering of children around the world.

Using Your Special Talents

Every one of your talents and interests can be used to help others and to make a difference in the world. You can use them in many ways.

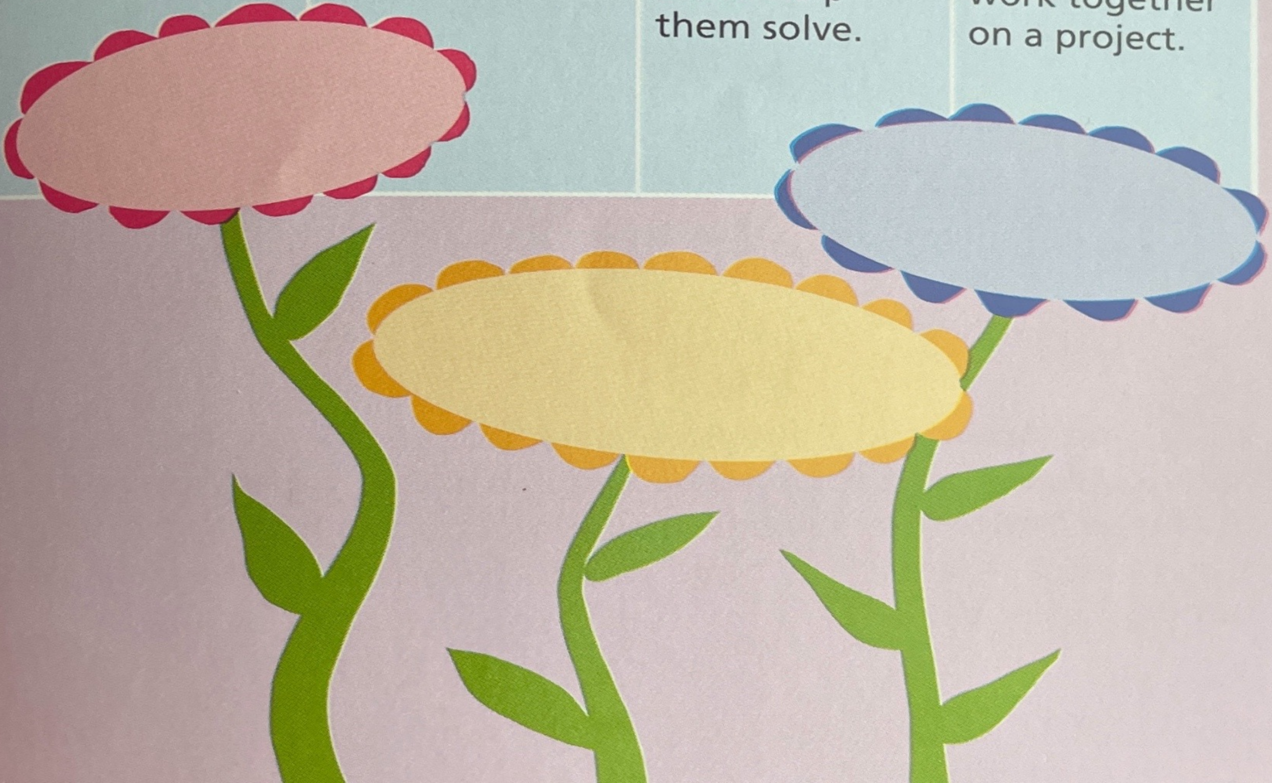
What you do depends on your personality and how you want to use your talents. Some people like to work closely with only one person. These people might want to be tutors or read to a person who is blind.

Other people might prefer to work with groups. These people might want to start a campaign to fight the disrespect and prejudice among students in schools. Others might like to organize a drive to collect food or blankets for people in need.

The chart on page 11 shows some activities that you can do to help others. These activities all help other people. They also require your time and effort. Can you think of any others?

Think about whether you want to work with an individual or a group. Are you interested in helping people by teaching them something? Maybe you would prefer to use your time fundraising or collecting items.

Education *(Helps people learn and understand new things)*	**Donations** *(Provides needed items to people who might not have them)*	**Political** *(Influences decision-makers and leaders)*	**Social** *(Helps solve a problem in our society)*
Volunteer to be a guide for a special event in your town.	Collect cans and bottles. Donate the proceeds to a childcare center.	Write a letter to your state senator about something you think should be done to make people's lives better in your state.	Volunteer to help build a park in a part of town where children don't have a place to play.
Create a Web site about an important topic that lots of people are interested in.	Contact local businesses for holiday gift donations for less fortunate children.	Organize a petition drive to tell city officials about things you'd like to change.	Start a school newspaper with kids' stories and artwork.
Volunteer to read at your library's preschool story time.	Join a national walk-a-thon to raise money for a good cause.	Take a poll of your classmates to find out what kinds of problems you could help them solve.	Contact a high-school student organization to see if you can work together on a project.



Getting Started on Helping Others

There are lots of fun and interesting ways to help others. But how do you get started?

The first step is to talk to your parents and other adults, along with your friends. Ask about what is going on in your school and community. Talking with people will also make your activity more fun. When people see how excited you are about helping others, they might want to join you. Then you can share the work and satisfaction.

Once you get an idea of what needs to be done, you'll have to decide whether you want to join a group or start your own.

The Great American Bake Sale is an organization that helps arrange bake sales for people who want to fight hunger in the United States. By selling baked goods like the ones shown here, these sales have raised $1.5 million to help feed hungry Americans.

Annie Helps Out

For some ideas on how to get started, let's follow four friends while they choose their first projects. Meet Annie, Miguel, Lee, and Hallanah.

Annie is a great cook. She hopes she will be able to put her talent for cooking to work someday.

A few weeks ago, Annie's mother showed her an article about kids having a bake sale. A national organization called The Great American Bake Sale had helped the kids get set up. The kids raised money to fight child hunger.

Annie liked the idea that her baking could help fight hunger in our country! She is now logging onto the Great American Bake Sale Web site to find out how to join in.

Miguel Helps Out

Meanwhile, Annie's friend Miguel has decided to work on a different project. Miguel's family came to the United States from Mexico. His parents have told him about the hardships they faced as migrant workers and how difficult it was to not have a permanent home.

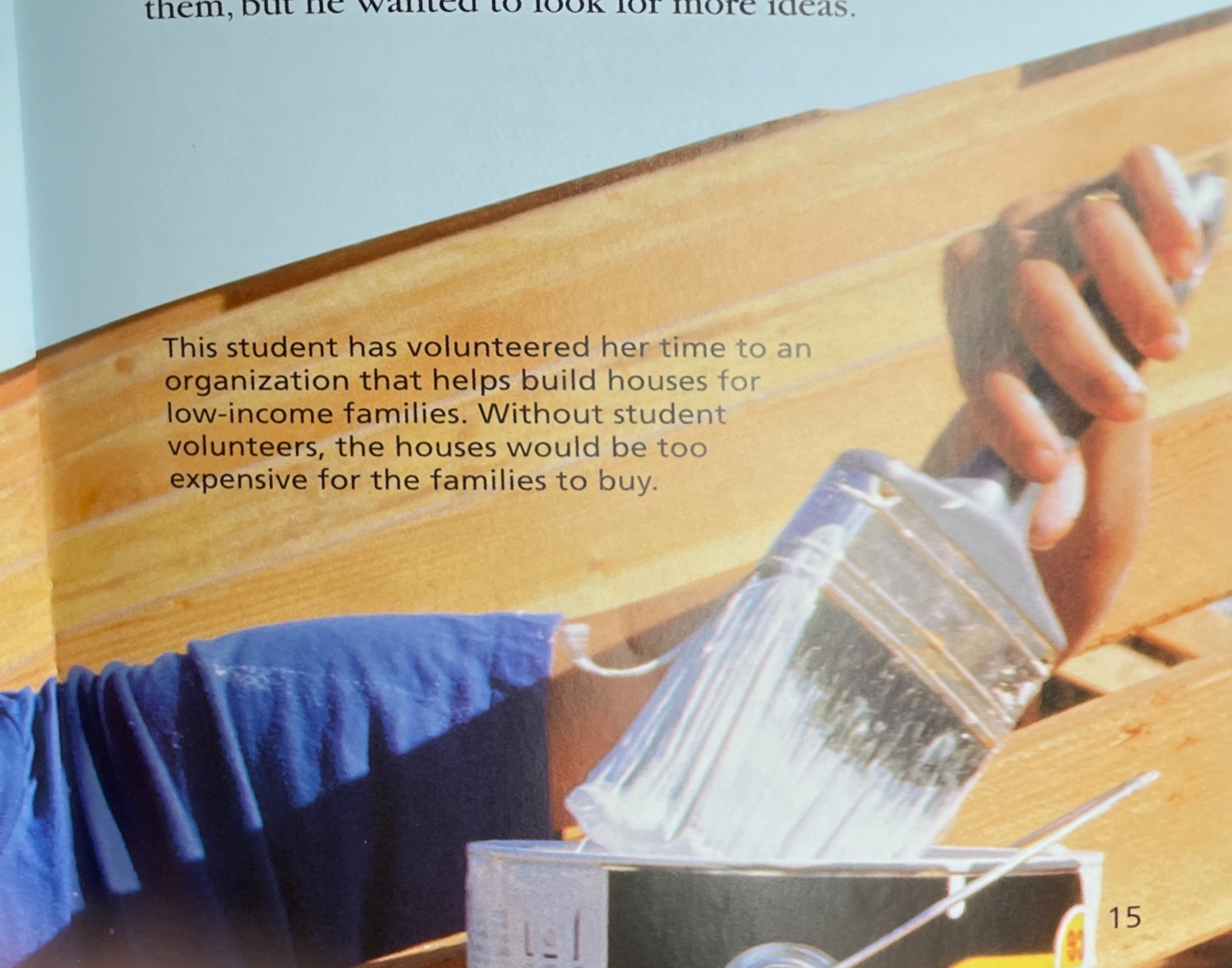
Miguel's teacher told him about an organization that helps build houses for low-income families. Miguel did a lot of research at the organization's Web site. He talked with people at the organization and asked former volunteers questions about the work they did. This summer, through the organization, Miguel is going to help a family of migrant workers build a house!

Lee Helps Out

Lee is having a hard time deciding on a project. He has so many interests that it is hard for him to choose.

Annie told Lee to check out two Web sites. The first site was for a program called Make a Difference Day. Lee found a page called "Project Ideas" and took a quiz. The quiz had Lee answer questions about whether he wanted to work alone or with a group. Lee answered questions about his skills and interests and filled in some boxes about things his community needs.

When Lee submitted his answers, more than a dozen project ideas came up on the screen. Lee liked three of them, but he wanted to look for more ideas.



This student has volunteered her time to an organization that helps build houses for low-income families. Without student volunteers, the houses would be too expensive for the families to buy.

The next day, Lee went to the library to continue his research. The librarian told him about an organization called Youth Service America. This organization sponsors National Youth Service Day, a special day when students work together to make a contribution in their communities.

Lee visited the organization's Web site on the library computer. The site instructed Lee to type in his zip code. When Lee did the site showed him what projects were happening in his area.

Lee, who is very interested in animals and the environment, saw three activities scheduled for the spring. One project involved collecting caterpillars for a scientist who is trying to figure out why many butterflies are disappearing. It looked perfect for Lee!

By logging on to a Web site, Lee found an interesting project that involved finding caterpillars (like the one shown below) and cleaning jars (like the ones shown to the right).

In order to help on the project, Lee needed to call the person responsible for organizing the volunteer collectors. This made Lee nervous. He decided to go home and ask his parents what to do.

When Lee got home, he thought about waiting for another day to make the phone call. Then he remembered that it takes courage to make a difference. Lee asked his mom's permission to call. She said it was OK, and together they practiced what he would say.

Lee's nervousness ended as soon as he called. The person he talked to was very happy to hear from him! She invited him to a meeting to learn more and to help clean caterpillar collection jars. The jars' lids had been left unscrewed, so they had to be cleaned.

Reviewing How It's Done

You've now seen how three young people who had never volunteered before got started. All of them wanted to do something they were interested in. Annie wanted to use her baking talents and found out about the Great American Bake Sale by talking with her mother. Miguel's teacher found out about an organization that helps build houses. Miguel did research on the organization and the work it does. Now he will be able to help build a house! Lee went to the library. There, he looked up projects on the Internet that interested him. All of these students had to do research and contact people and organizations.

Look at the chart below. It shows the steps to take to start helping others. If you're unsure about any part of the process, you can always refer back to the chart to refresh your memory.

Seven Steps To Get Started on Helping Others

1. Identify my interests and talents.
2. Talk to other people.
3. Find out what is happening in my community.
4. Find out about needs in my community.
5. Research projects and organizations.
6. Contact people to get involved.
7. Get started!

In contrast to Annie, Miguel, and Lee, Hallanah is an experienced volunteer. In kindergarten her mom encouraged her to join her on walk-a-thons. Since then she has walked more than fifty miles. For each mile Hallanah walked, friends and family members donated money for cancer and cerebral palsy research. Last year she signed up a for a National Youth Service Day car wash that raised money for a local preschool.

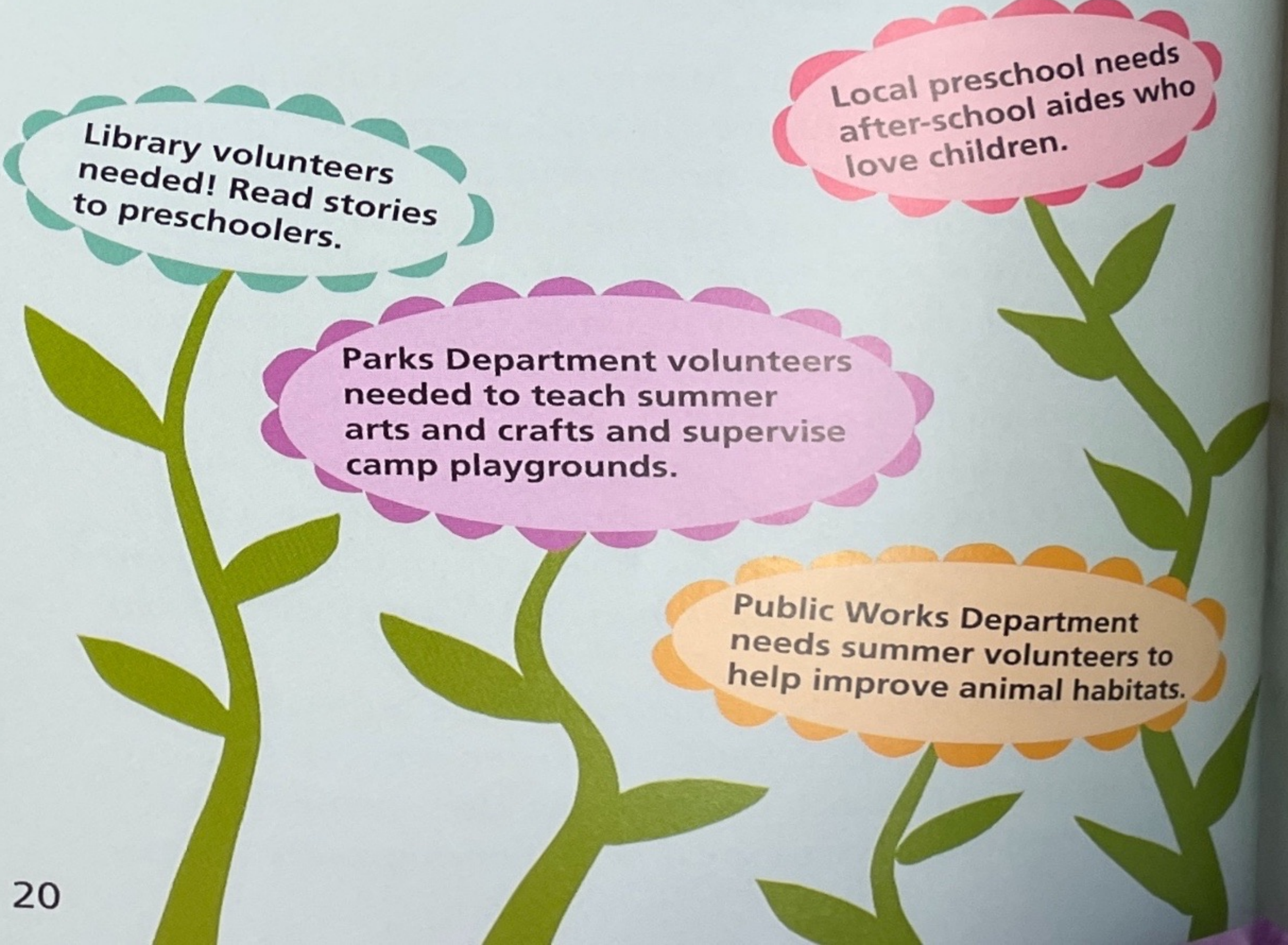
Hallanah had been thinking about her talents and interests. Her friends and teachers tell her she is a good communicator. Hallanah also loves computers. She wanted to combine her talents and interests in a way that would help others.

On the way to school one morning, a big smile spread across Hallanah's face. She had realized what she wanted to do! Before Hallanah did anything else, she knew that she would first have to speak with her computer teacher.

How Hallanah Helped Out

After school Hallanah rushed down to the computer room. She asked her computer teacher if she could create her own Web site.

Her teacher liked the idea! He agreed to let Hallanah make a site that would help students become volunteers. Her site would have information about volunteer opportunities with all different kinds of organizations. Hallanah also decided to include stories about young people who volunteered. Those young people would be able to see pictures of themselves and their projects on the Web site. They would also be able to read about how others got started and the success they've had.

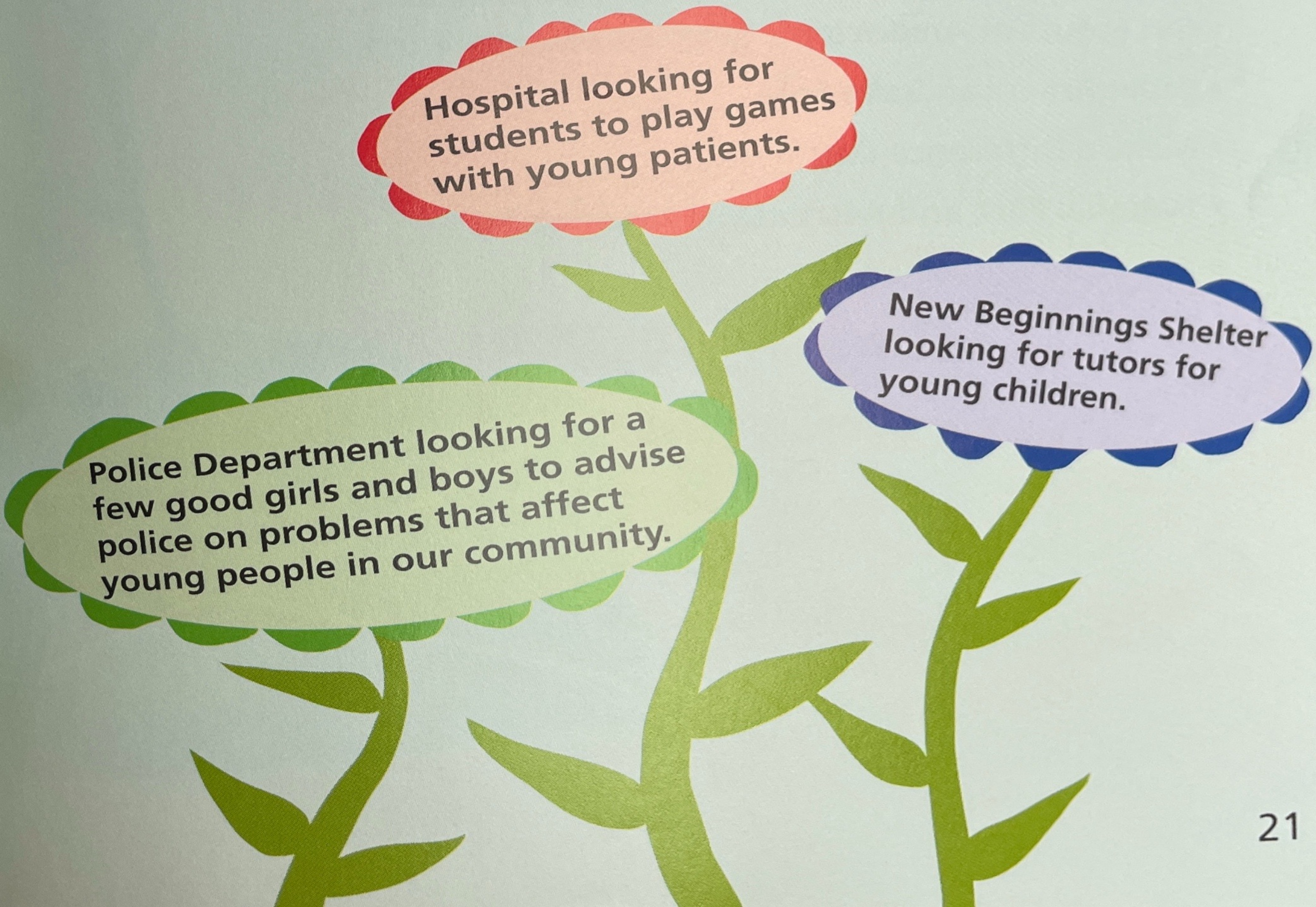

Library volunteers needed! Read stories to preschoolers.
Local preschool needs after-school aides who love children.
Parks Department volunteers needed to teach summer arts and crafts and supervise camp playgrounds.
Public Works Department needs summer volunteers to help improve animal habitats.

Hallanah worked on her Web site for several weeks. She found that making a Web site about volunteering took a lot of the same skills as being a volunteer.

She had to talk to a lot of people to gather information about volunteer opportunities in her community. She talked with people who work for the city. These people work in the library, the parks department, the police department, and the public works department. They all wanted to be listed on Hallanah's Web site.

Hallanah also talked to the directors of several nonprofit organizations. The director of the hospital, several preschools, and the homeless shelter all had volunteer opportunities for her to list.

Hallanah's Web site soon blossomed with opportunities for students to help out and volunteer! Below are some of the opportunities that Hallanah's Web site offered.


Hospital looking for students to play games with young patients.
New Beginnings Shelter looking for tutors for young children.
Police Department looking for a few good girls and boys to advise police on problems that affect young people in our community.

Hallanah Makes Her Picks

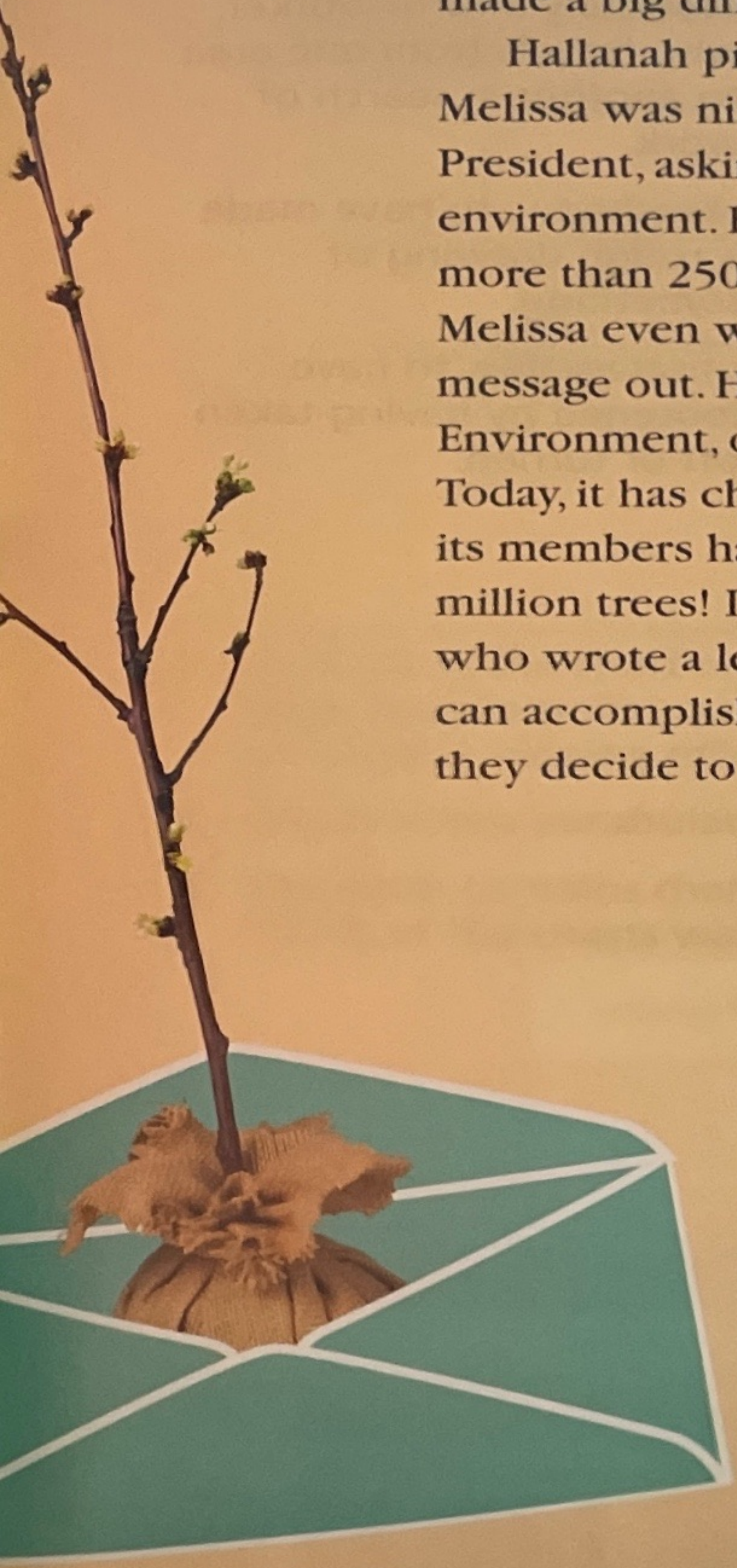
Hallanah had to do a lot of research about national organizations. She visited more than twenty-five Web sites and looked at the kinds of activities they sponsored. She also compared them with each other to see how the opportunities they offered were both alike and different. Hallanah thought that displaying that kind of information on her Web site would help students find just the right project! The chart below lists the national organizations that Hallanah recommended the most, based on the opportunities for volunteering that they provide.

Hallanah's Top Picks

- American Red Cross
- Boys and Girls Club of America
- Girl Scouts of America
- Great American Bake Sale
- Make a Difference Day
- National Park and Recreation Association
- Youth Service America

Hallanah decided to profile a different student each week on her Web site. For her first profile she decided to pick someone who was especially inspiring and who had made a big difference.

Hallanah picked Melissa Poe. When Melissa was nine, she wrote a letter to the President, asking him to help clean up the environment. Her letter soon appeared on more than 250 billboards across the country. Melissa even went on television to get her message out. Her club, Kids For a Clean Environment, or Kids F.A.C.E., grew and grew. Today, it has chapters all over the world, and its members have helped plant more than a million trees! It's all thanks to a young girl who wrote a letter. As you can see, students can accomplish pratically anything when they decide to help out!



Glossary

caterpillar *n.* the wormlike larvae of insects such as butterflies and moths.

cocoon *n.* case of silky thread spun by the larvae of various insects, to live in while they are developing into adults.

disrespect *n.* a lack of respect for someone or something.

emerge *v.* to come into view or into the open.

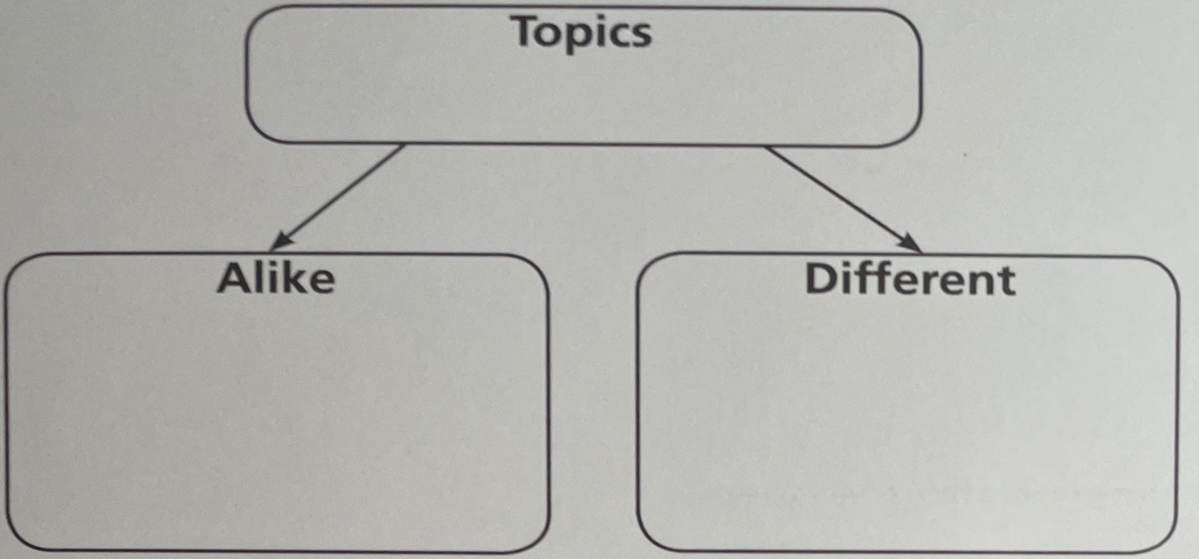
migrant *n.* a worker, especially a farm worker, who travels from one area to another in search of work.

sketched *v.* to have made a rough drawing of something.

unscrewed *v.* to have loosened by having taken off or turned.

Reader Response

1. Using a graphic organizer like the one below, compare and contrast how Lee and Miguel helped other people.



2. Go back to the chart on page 18. After reading it, what questions do you still have about how to get involved in helping others?
3. Which of the vocabulary words contain prefixes?
4. This book contains charts on pages 11, 18, and 22. Which of the charts was most helpful and why?

Suggested levels for Guided Reading, DRA,™ Lexile,® and Reading Recovery™ are provided in the Pearson Scott Foresman Leveling Guide.

Genre	Comprehension Skill and Strategy	Text Features
Nonfiction	• Compare and Contrast • Answer Questions	• Captions • Charts • Glossary

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